

The Last Haunting of Edgar Allan Poe

Character Development in *The Beale Papers*:

Another Tale of the Ragged Mountains?

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The Beale Papers is the tale of a treasure secretly buried near Bedford, Virginia by a group of thirty adventurous Virginians. The story, published anonymously in 1885 in Lynchburg, is presented to the public as a factual history of the discovery of gold and silver in Santa Fe in 1818 and its subsequent transport to and burial in Virginia. Much of the tale concerns the relationship between Thomas Beale, the group's leader, and Robert Morriss, a respected Lynchburg innkeeper whom Beale entrusted with three coded messages purported to provide the treasure's composition, location and intended recipients. After the mysterious disappearance of the entire Beale party in 1822, solving the ciphers became the only way to find the treasure. For many cryptographers and treasure hunters over the past one hundred and twenty-eight years, this mystery became an obsession and the story has developed into a "Holy Grail" of cryptographic and treasure lore.

The Ragged Mountains can be found approximately one hour northeast of Lynchburg on the road to Charlottesville. The mountains were made famous by Poe's *A Tale of the Ragged Mountains* ("*Ragged Mountains*"), published in 1845, which explored various pseudo-scientific topics including what is now referred to as mental telepathy. As in *The Beale Papers*, a central component of the *Ragged Mountains* story concerns the relationship between the two protagonists, Augustus Bedloe, a well-to-do convalescent suffering, in 1827, from various neurologic and physical disorders, and a young British Officer, Mr. Oldeb, who served in India in 1780, forty-seven years earlier.

This monograph explores the doubling or "doppelganger" techniques utilized by Poe in connecting Bedloe and Oldeb, particularly the selection and use of words in describing the physical characteristics of each man, their natural surroundings and the circumstances in which they find themselves. Poe's methods of connecting Bedloe and Oldeb are then compared to the techniques utilized by the Beale author in developing the relationship between Beale and Morriss.

A Tale of the Ragged Mountains

One of the best examples of the "double" or "doppelganger" theme in fiction is Poe's *A Tale of the Ragged Mountains*. Comparing this classic short story, particularly the juxtaposition

of Poe's characters, Augustus Bedloe and Mr. Oldeb, with the methods utilized by the Beale author to develop Beale and Morriss, may help to identify similar techniques in each tale. The fact that Poe walked among the Ragged Mountains as a student at the University of Virginia and used the mountains as a setting for his famous story, and that the setting of *The Beale Papers* is less than 100 miles away, only adds to the intriguing relationship between these two tales. Finally, although the two stories are very different in many aspects, their similarities, particularly in the presentations of both sets of characters, may be worth examining for possible clues to solving the Beale mystery.

A Tale of the Ragged Mountains

Bedloe v. Oldeb: Opposite Sides of the Same Coin

In *Ragged Mountains*, Poe creates a mysterious transformation from one character to another by use of the tried and true technique of a drug induced dream state. The story begins one day in 1845 when Augustus Bedloe, a convalescing patient of Dr. Templeton, an elder gentleman who as a young man served in India with the British army, undertakes his customary walk in the Ragged Mountains after ingesting his habitual large dose of morphine. During his exercise in the hills, Bedloe experiences an extraordinary conversion in time and space to the 1780 insurrection of Cheyte Sing, the Rajah of Benares, India against the corrupt British Governor-General Warren Hastings. The sickly, excitable Bedloe, somehow assuming the person of a courageous, young British Officer, Mr. Oldeb, heroically leads a charge against the rebels in an effort to help his British and Indian colleagues.

Mechanically, Poe's thirty-four paragraph text is split fairly evenly between paragraphs that describe Bedloe and Oldeb, with the first seven devoted to Bedloe in Virginia and the next eleven to Oldeb in India. Most fascinating, though, is the manner in which Poe mingles words between the two portions of his story. Poe describes the setting, action, characters, etc. by utilizing the same or similar words in different ways in his descriptions of Bedloe and Oldeb. In *The Beale Papers*, the anonymous Beale author utilizes similar techniques in developing the interplay between Beale and Morriss, although the differences between the two characters are not as cleanly separated in the Beale text.

Appearance

Bedloe is introduced in the first paragraph by the unnamed narrator as "remarkable" but difficult to comprehend. His family history and his age were a mystery to the narrator, who thought Bedloe a "young" man who might also be "a hundred years of age". Bedloe appeared physically "emaciated", he "stooped", his forehead was "low and broad" and his complexion was "bloodless". His face, particularly his smile, had "no variation" whatsoever and seemed

“one of profound melancholy” and “phaseless and unceasing gloom”. His eyes could grow “inconceivably” bright but normally were “vapid, filmy and dull,” like the eyes of a corpse.

Poe conveyed to the reader in a somewhat dramatic fashion that Oldeb and Bedloe shared the same remarkable features by revealing that a “miraculously accurate” miniature portrait of Oldeb from 1780 appeared to be a precise replica of Bedloe. In fact, Dr. Templeton confessed that Oldeb was a dear friend of his who died while both were serving in Benares and that Bedloe’s likeness to Oldeb is what first induced him to strike up a relationship.

Demeanor

While Bedloe is described as apologizing for his “peculiarities of person” and he gives the impression that “he had not always been what he was,” he is most definitely sick and under the care of Dr. Templeton, a convert of Mesmer, for his neurologic disorders. Over the years the doctor struggled hard and finally “gained his point as to induce” Bedloe to submit to mesmeric experimentation. The relationship between doctor and patient under the “magnetic” treatment of the mesmerist was one in which the patient eventually came under the complete control of the physician. Bedloe was further described as “in the highest degree sensitive, excitable, enthusiastic” with a “vigorous” imagination. Bedloe was also a habitual user of copious quantities of morphine.

Poe revealed Oldeb’s personality primarily through his actions during the Benares insurrection, but also in the manner in which Bedloe explained his conversion to Oldeb during his experience in the Ragged Mountains. For example, Bedloe/Oldeb told of his descent into a strange city during which he became “intensely imbued with personal interest in what was going on.” Bedloe/Oldeb felt that he had an “important part to play” and, after joining the weaker, smaller British party, he armed himself and “fought with the nervous, ferocity of despair.” After retreating to a kiosk, Oldeb “spoke a few hurried but energetic words to his companions” and, “gaining over a few to my purpose,” made a frantic sally from the kiosk. After “mad” fighting, Oldeb became “bewildered and entangled” among the “narrow streets of tall, overhanging houses, into the recesses of which the sun had never been able to shine.”

Observe the juxtaposition of these two characters’ personalities. It is difficult not to admire Poe’s writing in this instance. Observe how Poe subtly, almost elegantly, incorporates Bedloe’s ailments and personal characteristics into the actions of Oldeb in Benares. Take a look at the placement by Poe of the word *gain*, which appears only twice in the entire short story, once in the “Bedloe section” of the tale and again in the “Oldeb portion.” The word first appears in a discussion of the doctor patient relationship, with the weaker Bedloe eventually succumbing when Dr. Templeton “*gained* his point” and induced Bedloe to submit to

experiments. Later, as a stronger, perhaps younger man, Oldeb succeeded in “*gaining over a few*” soldiers to join him in a frantic sally.

Although the specific words do not reappear, Poe’s description of Bedloe as “in the highest degree sensitive, excitable and enthusiastic” is presented perfectly in the actions of Oldeb in Benares. Oldeb is certainly extremely sensitive. After Bedloe/Oldeb becomes “a new man” after bathing in a spring, his senses are finely tuned to his new environment to such a point that he “gazes wonderingly for many minutes” at the shadow of a palm tree. Oldeb’s excitability is demonstrated by his actions in leading a “rash and fatal” sally from the kiosk. Finally, Oldeb’s enthusiasm is apparent when he “seems to feel that he had an important part to play and in his fighting with the “nervous, ferocity of despair” for the weaker British warriors.

Virginia v. Benares Scenes

Poe’s development of the vastly different geography, climate and culture of Virginia and Benares is true to both areas, although he could not resist a pun on “Indian” summer. Poe uses the mist of the Ragged Mountains to create the aura of mystery surrounding Bedloe’s transformation to Oldeb in Benares. Regardless of the function or meaning of the original word (i.e. in the discussion of Bedloe), Poe inter-mingles certain words from the “Bedloe” section of the story and places them in the “Oldeb” section. Take, for example, the word *recesses*, first used by Poe to describe the secluded, almost inaccessible ravine which Bedloe penetrated in the beginning of his transformation to Oldeb and later used in the description of the Benares of 1780 in which Oldeb existed.

Bedloe in the Ragged Mountains:

So entirely secluded, and in fact inaccessible, except through a series of accidents, is the entrance of the ravine, that it is by no means impossible that I was the first adventurer – the very first and sole adventurer who had ever penetrated its *recesses*. (p.7)

Oldeb in Benares:

In the meantime we were borne far from the kiosk, and became bewildered and entangled among the narrow streets of tall, overhanging houses, into the *recesses* of which the sun had never been able to shine. (p.19)

Some more examples of Poe’s “word pairing” between the Bedloe and Oldeb sections:

“Word Pairing” in *Ragged Mountains*

Remember, these words appear in different sections of the story, many paragraphs apart. Perhaps Poe had some sense of the subliminal powers of the mind when he wrote his

tales because his subtle placement of the same or similar words in vastly different sections of the story seems to indicate a purposeful design.

Below are some of the similarities, contrasts and unusual uses by Poe of the words highlighted. There is nothing exceptional about the words other than their placement in different sections of the story.

Bedloe was singularly **tall** (p.1) ... while Oldeb, in Benares, “became entangled among the narrow streets of **tall** overhanging houses” while fighting the insurgents. (p.19)

Bedloe **stooped** much. His **limbs** were exceedingly long (p.1) ... Shortly after seeing a hyena on his walk in the Ragged Mountains, Bedloe, with much uncertainty and skepticism, began his transformation to Oldeb. “I rubbed my eyes. I pinched my **limbs**. A small spring of water presented itself to my view, and here, **stooping**, I bathed my hands and my head and neck ... I arose, as I thought, a new man.” (p.11)

Bedloe’s eyes, in moments of excitement, grew bright to a degree almost **inconceivable** (p.1) ... As Oldeb descended into the city of Benares he very suddenly, by some **inconceivable** impulse, became intensely imbued with personal interest in what was going on. (p.18)

Certainly, the word *tall* is a common adjective but words such as *limbs*, *stooped* and even *inconceivable* appear less frequently in literature. When many such words are repeated in a story perhaps the author is creating these “word pairings” deliberately to convey some hidden message. The pattern continues:

Bedloe’s peculiarities of person appeared to cause him much **annoyance** (p.2) ... But when Oldeb bathed his hands, head and neck in a small spring, the sensations that had **annoyed** him dissipated. (p.11)

Bedloe’s neurologic attacks had **reduced** him from a condition of personal beauty (p.2) ... Oldeb was **reduced** to absolute groping in a thick mist. (p.9)

Bedloe **departed** as usual for the hills of Virginia (p.5) ... The crowd had **departed** in Benares after Oldeb is shot with an arrow (P.22)

The narrator was not prepared to assert Bedloe’s relationship with Dr. Templeton extended **beyond the limits** of sleep-producing power (p.3) ... **Beyond the limits** of the city of Benares arose, in frequent majestic groups, the palm and the cocoa, with other gigantic and weird trees. (p.15)

As can be seen in the above examples, Poe frequently placed words used for one purpose in describing one character into the paragraphs of the other character but in a

completely different context. So, for instance, Poe first inserts the words *instantaneously* and *volition* into paragraph three when describing the close mesmeric relationship between Bedloe and Templeton; but, when the reader next sees the word *instantaneous*, in paragraph nineteen, Bedloe has become Oldeb, travelled to Benares of 1780, joined a group of British and Indian soldiers, and been shot in the head by an arrow which caused him to be seized with an “*instantaneous* and dreadful sickness.” Likewise, the word *volition* appears again in paragraph twenty-two to describe Oldeb’s lack of feelings as a corpse (“*volition*, I had none...”) in Benares just before beginning the return journey to the Ragged Mountains and his existence as Bedloe. And in one final example, Poe developed his description of mesmerism as a miracle witnessed by *thousands* in paragraph three while discussing Bedloe and then used the word again in paragraph nine in describing the transformation to Oldeb with the phrase, “A *thousand* vague fancies oppressed and disconcerted me...”

Poe appeared to have placed about two dozen of these word pairings into the *Ragged Mountains* tale. The most obvious example of the intermingling of words between the “double” lives of Poe’s two main characters can be seen in the symmetry between the deaths of Bedloe and Oldeb.

Death of Oldeb and Bedloe

The manner in which Poe killed Bedloe and Oldeb is consistent with the doubling theme of the story, as both die from a wound to the head.

After leading his mad dash to freedom, Oldeb is surrounded by his enemies and felled by an arrow. This arrow is described in great detail by Poe as “resembling in some respects the *writhing* creese [Note: a short sword or heavy dagger] of the Malay. {It was} made to imitate the body of a creeping *serpent* and {was} long and *black*, with a *poisoned* barb.” The arrow struck Oldeb in the *right temple* and he died. After his death, Oldeb regained consciousness as Bedloe, and he floated out of the city, retracing his path to and among the Ragged Mountains.

When Bedloe returned to his companions in Charlottesville, he had a slight cold and fever, which resulted in much blood to his head. About a week later, Bedloe died from an accident related to his being bled with leeches. Poe described this accident:

“...Leeches were applied to the temples. In a fearfully brief period the patient died, when it appeared that, in the jar containing the leeches, had been introduced, by accident, one of the venomous vermicular sangsues which are now and then found in the neighbouring ponds. This creature fastened itself upon a small artery in the *right temple*...N.B. – The *poisonous* sangsue of Charlottesville may always be distinguished from the medicinal leech by its *blackness*, and especially its *writhing* or vermicular motions, which very nearly resemble those of a *snake*.”

Here, Poe is not so subtle and one can hardly miss the similarities in the deaths of Bedloe and Oldeb. Both men die from an injury to the right temple. The immediate cause of death in both cases was poison. The instrument which delivered the poison to Oldeb was an arrow which “resembled in some respects the writhing creese of the Malay” and was “made to imitate the body of a creeping serpent and {was} long and black with a poisonous barb.” Bedloe died from the poison of a sangsue, a leech “distinguished from the medicinal leech by its blackness, and especially by its writhing or vermicular motions, which very nearly resemble those of the snake.”

Last Name - Palindrome

Lest the reader missed all of his clues in the Bedloe/Oldeb transformation, Poe closes his short story with one final unmistakable clue that the two men are somehow related. Poe alters the spelling of Bedloe’s last name in his obituary via a typographical error so that the spelling becomes Bedlo, a palindrome of Oldeb!

Let us now explore a similar doubling theme in *The Beale Papers*.

The Beale Papers

Morriss v. Beale

If *The Beale Papers* is an historical account of a journey to the American Southwest which resulted in the discovery of a treasure in gold and silver than one should not expect to find the techniques of a work of fiction present in the tale. Yet, apparently, that is the case as many aspects of this story appear fictional. One in particular, the relationship between Thomas Beale and Robert Morriss, is worth a close examination, for the Beale author appears to expend considerable effort to establish a doppelganger-like relationship between the two men. Although both Beale and Morriss are educated Virginia gentlemen of honorable character, the Beale author presents to the reader two vastly different men, almost opposites, in demeanor, lifestyle and, ultimately, their fates, yet he simultaneously connects both men in myriad ways. Beale is the adventurous, edgy, ladies’ man who fights at the drop of an insult, seeks danger for the thrill of it and risks all, including his life, on a chance discovery of gold and silver. Morriss is the friendly, almost gentle, family man who is good to everyone, rich or poor, devotes his energies to his wife, friends and community (including his hotel), and dies beloved by all. Although Beale is thought to be from Western Virginia, his roots and family history are vague and uncertain while Morriss, although originally from Maryland, established deep roots in the Lynchburg area and became a bedrock pillar of that community. Beale is presumed to have died at a very young age of privation, Indian attack or in some other ghastly manner while

Morriss died in his eightieth year surrounded by loving friends and beloved by the entire community. In many ways, Morriss and Beale, like Bedloe and Oldeb, appear to be opposite sides of the same coin.

The methods used by the Beale author to develop the similarities and contrasts between Morriss and Beale, particularly when compared to a classic work of fiction such as *Ragged Mountains*, may be instructive.

Morriss and Beale: Family Man v. Adventurer

One theme in *The Beale Papers* may have derived from Francis Bacon's famous quote, "He that hath wife and children hath given hostages to fortune; for they are impediments to great enterprises, either of virtue or mischief." The quote appears in Josiah Gregg's two volume journal *Commerce of the Prairies*, one of the most authoritative writings concerning the Santa Fe Trail and a possible source for the Beale author. (See *The Last Haunting of Edgar Allan Poe: Josiah Gregg's Commerce of the Prairies, A Possible Source for The Beale Papers* here: <http://www.lasthaunting.com/#!essays/galleryPage>). One major difference between Morriss and Beale explored in great detail by the Beale author is each man's relationships to others, both men and women, and in his respective community.

Relationship to Men

Morriss was a respected hotel keeper who became famous as a host because of his friendly personality, reliability and discretion. He was devoted to his community and nurturing to his fellow man. Morriss was respected and trusted by men for his "kind disposition, strict probity, excellent management and well-ordered household" but he also possessed that mysterious quality which caused men to develop a "confidence and affection" for him. Men, both rich and poor, liked and "appreciated" Morriss. He counted among his friends such distinguished "first men of the country" as Jackson, Clay, Coles, Witcher and Chief Justice Marshall, but Morriss was also good to the poor, supplying food and shelter without complaint or compensation to those in need.

Beale was respected by men for his toughness, intelligence and leadership capabilities. Tall, strong and handsome, Beale was friendly to men but he had an edge to his personality which men feared, for Beale would fight at any hint of "impertinence". Beale was elected Captain of his band of men and they trusted him with their lives and fortunes. But with most men, Beale could be vague about his background and independent in his manner. Once a man gained his trust, though, Beale was a loyal and trusted companion.

Men might define their view of Morriss as a man they liked and appreciated, whereas the attitudes of most men toward Beale might be closer to respect and fear.

Relationship with Women

The Beale author devoted considerable effort to paint a picture of Morriss as a devoted husband and good neighbor. His wife Sarah was portrayed as the perfect wife. She was described in glowing terms as a “fine looking and accomplished young lady,” a wife “without reproach, and a “generous and sympathizing woman ... without equal.” Mrs. Morriss was so good to the poor that they “will long remember her charities.” Her devotion to her husband was unsurpassed as she demonstrated when he lost everything “save his honor” during a downturn in the tobacco market. Mrs. Morriss “exhibited the loveliest traits of her character” by “so encouraging her husband with cheering words and smiling face” that he became resigned to his fate, picked himself up by his bootstraps and carried on by entering the hotel business.

In contrast to the ideal, almost fairytale marriage of Robert Morriss, Thomas J. Beale was single (at least, he was not said to have been married) and, perhaps, something of a rogue as he was “favored by the ladies.” Where the Beale author said nothing whatsoever about the physical appearance of Mr. Morriss, he devoted considerable time and energy to the physical description of Thomas Beale. Through Morriss, the Beale author described Beale as “the handsomest man I had ever seen ... altogether, a model of manly beauty” about “six feet in height” with an unusually strong “symmetrical form”. The Beale author painted Beale as possessing almost pirate-like good looks with dark, flowing hair, black eyes and a dark and swarthy complexion.

Apparently his good looks and charming personality were not wasted, as Beale was “extremely popular with everyone, particularly the ladies.” Beale was “reverentially tender and polite” to women to such an extent that “a pleasant and friendly intercourse was quickly established between them.”

Relationship to Community

The contrast between the two men is not total; both are Virginia gentlemen of character. Where Morriss is an “old Virginia gentleman” Beale is described as “a gentlemen, well educated, evidently of good family and with popular manners.” The Beale author placed the word “evidently” into his description of Beale’s family background because the author specifically created Beale as a man of mystery. Although Beale was from Virginia, his background was a mystery to Morriss, and thus the reader. Through Morriss, the Beale author revealed that Beale, as a guest at Morriss’ hotel “registered simply from Virginia, but I am of the impression he was from some western portion of the State. Curiously enough, he never adverted to his family or to his antecedents...” Although Morriss’ early years in Maryland were

undefined, the Beale author devoted considerable effort to characterize Morriss as a devoted husband and a pillar of the Lynchburg community.

Morriss: Fact and Fiction

An admired Lynchburg hotelkeeper named Robert Morriss apparently did live during the Beale timespan and he may have possessed many of the traits of the fictional Robert Morriss of *The Beale Papers*. Still, if *The Beale Papers* is a work of fiction than the Robert Morriss in the Beale tale was a fictional character. This intermingling of fact and fiction was a favored Poe technique; he used the real name of his boarding school headmaster, for example, in *William Wilson* and Poe gave Wilson his own date of birth. In *The Balloon Hoax*, Poe mentioned actual scientists and referenced real scientific studies to reinforce the legitimacy of his hoax story that a balloon had flown across the Atlantic from England to Charleston, South Carolina.

Perhaps the Beale author, knowing the reputation of the real Robert Morriss, used his name and background in *The Beale Papers* to inject realism into the treasure mystery. Of course, if the Beale story was written purely as a hoax, then the closer the connection to real people and events, the more realistic is the tale. On the other hand, the Beale author may not have wished to make his fictional character too similar to the real Robert Morriss so, perhaps, he did not provide any description of Morriss' appearance for that reason.

Comparisons of Morriss and Beale: Word Pairings in *The Beale Papers*

Financial Success

Although both men are described as Virginia gentlemen, Morriss and Beale are in decidedly different financial circumstances, at least at the end of the story. Early in his life, Morriss experienced some success in the tobacco business but he quickly lost his life savings speculating in an "upward" market. Thereafter and throughout the tale, Morriss must work for a living as a hotelkeeper. With the support of his loving wife and a determined, yet friendly personality, Morriss managed to live a long, happy life, rich in friends, at least, if not financial assets. Beale is a man "financially able to encounter the expense" of a two year expedition to the American southwest undertaken purely for the joy of hunting and visiting the "great Western plains." One has the sense that Beale and the members of his party may rank somewhat higher than Morriss in Virginia ante bellum society based on their ability to finance such a leisurely pursuit but the Beale author does not provide details. Ultimately, Morriss, despite a relative lack of financial resources, lives a happy life as a beloved member of Lynchburg society, while Beale, although wealthy beyond measure, apparently dies in the wilderness as a very young man.

Does the Beale author actually attempt to make a comparison between Morriss and Beale? On the surface, the story is an historical rendition of the discovery and subsequent burial of a treasure in Bedford. Why would the author make a comparison of the lives of these two men? If the story is fiction, the author may have some ulterior motive in telling the tale, perhaps as a “morality play” espousing the evils of the love of money. One method of analyzing the intentions of the author is to examine and compare the words he used to describe both men. It may be possible to glean a slight hint of the author’s message in this manner. Researchers may be more certain, though, that some subliminal message may have been intended by the Beale author, if *the same words* are repeatedly used to describe both men.

Visions

Like Poe in *Ragged Mountains*, the Beale author often used the same word to describe the persons, places or events in the lives of Morriss and Beale. For example, the word *visions* appears only twice in *The Beale Papers*, once in paragraph seven in describing Morriss’ fall from wealth and again in paragraph 45 when the Beale party discovered gold and silver in a cleft some 300 miles north of Santa Fe.

The word *visions* can be seen first in paragraph seven regarding Morriss’ financial downfall:

“Heavy purchases of tobacco at ruinous figures, in anticipation of an upward market, which *visions* were never realized, swept from him in a moment the savings of years, and left him nothing save his honor and the sincere sympathy of the community with which to begin the battle anew.” (p.7)

Much later in the story, in paragraph 45, the word *visions* can be seen again when the Beale author uses it to describe the magnificent moment of the discovery of gold by Beale’s men:

“All the pleasures and temptations which had lured them to the plains were now forgotten, and *visions* of boundless wealth and future grandeur were the only ideas entertained.” (p.45)

One cannot help but notice that the two circumstances where the word *visions* appears in the Beale story describe the completely opposite events and emotions connected to dismal financial failure, on the one hand, and incalculable mercenary success, on the other. Ironically, what seems to Morriss as a disaster at the time is actually a blessing in disguise, as he builds a life filled with love for his wife and his neighbors in Lynchburg. With Beale, the opposite occurs, when the incredible find of a fortune in precious metals leads to an untimely death, due, perhaps, to an excessive paranoia over the treasure.

Universal Reputation

Both Morriss and Beale had universally known reputations, although for significantly different reasons. In paragraph 10, the Beale author, perhaps given to hyperbole, summed up the saintly qualities and generous spirits of Mr. and Mrs. Morriss and the love and admiration felt for them by the Lynchburg community, with this eulogy:

“It can be truly said that no persons ever lived in a community for such a length of time who accomplished more good during their lives, or whose death was more **universally regretted.” (p.9)**

Beale, on the other hand, was known as a man not to be trifled with, for he would call out anyone who offended him:

“... if they were supercilious or presuming, the lion was aroused, and woe to the man who offended him. Instances of this character occurred more than once while he was my guest, and always resulted in his demanding and receiving an apology. His character soon became **universally known, and he was no longer troubled by impertinence.” (p.17)**

Purchaser and Shipper

Both Morriss and Beale were involved in the purchase and shipment of commodities. In his early days, Morriss was a “purchaser and shipper of tobacco.” He was “eminently successful” in the tobacco business “for several years” until he lost everything in a wrong bet on futures pricing:

“Shortly after his removal to Lynchburg, Mr. Morriss engaged in the mercantile business, and shortly thereafter he became a **purchaser and shipper of tobacco...” (p.6)**

With respect to Beale, the author used the word *purchase* in his description of Beale’s preparations for his expedition to Santa Fe:

“The company being formed, we forthwith commenced our preparations, and, early in April, 1817, left old Virginia for St. Louis, Mo., where we expected to **purchase the necessary outfits... (p.40)**

The word *shipment* appears in the Beale author’s description of the Beale party’s discussions concerning the transportation of their gold and silver to Virginia:

“It was not considered advisable to retain so large an amount in so wild and dangerous a locality...We were in a dilemma. Some advised one plan, some another. One recommended Santa Fe as the safest place to deposit it, while others objected, and advocated its **shipment at once to the States... (p.45)**

Accomplishments

Both Mr. and Mrs. Morriss were praised for their *accomplishments* in helping the poor and doing good works for their community. Beale, to the contrary, is focused on the accumulation of gold and silver when he conveys his hopes to Morriss that his efforts to mine, transport and store the treasure are *accomplished* successfully.

Observe this statement on the Morriss' accomplishments:

"It can truly be said that no persons ever lived in a community for such a length of time who *accomplished* more good during their lives, or whose death was more universally regretted. (p.9)

Compare the Morriss' accomplishments to Beale's comments on his accomplishments in accumulating the treasure:

"We can only hope for the best, and persevere until our work is *accomplished*, and the sum secured for which we are striving." (p.49)

Old Virginia

The Beale author used the phrase "Old Virginia" twice, once in describing Morriss and once when discussing the logistics of the Beale expedition from Virginia to Santa Fe.

Regarding Morriss, the Beale author commented that:

As an "*old Virginia* gentleman," he was sans peur et sans reproche, and to a remarkable extent possessed the confidence and affection of his friends. (p.9)

Beale, in his January 4, 1822 letter to Morriss noted:

The company being formed, we forthwith commenced our preparations, and, early in April, 1817, left *old Virginia* for St. Louis, Mo., where we expected to purchase the necessary outfits, procure a guide and two or three servants, and obtain such information and advice as might be beneficial hereafter. (p.40)

Engaged in Business

Both Morriss and Beale were described by the Beale author as being engaged in business, but the nature of their work was decidedly different, especially with respect to physical danger.

Morriss' brief foray into the mercantile and tobacco businesses is described as such:

Shortly after his removal to Lynchburg, Mr. Morriss engaged in the mercantile business, and shortly thereafter he became a purchaser and shipper of tobacco to an extent hitherto unknown in this section. (p.6)

Beale was also engaged in business but a much more dangerous type.

You will be aware from what I have written, that we are engaged in a perilous enterprise – one which promises glorious results if successful – but dangers intervene, and of the end no one can tell. (p.28 and p.49)

Management and Order

Both Morriss and Beale were orderly in their business habits. Morriss ran a well ordered household while Beale's men needed his leadership and direction to establish an orderly system for mining and transporting the gold and silver they discovered.

Morriss' management skills and attention to detail are mentioned here:

His kind disposition, strict probity, excellent management, and well ordered household, soon rendered him famous as a host, and his reputation extended even to other States. (p.8)

Beale's skills are discussed shortly after his men discover and begin accumulating gold and silver:

Though all were at work, there was nothing like order or method in their plans, and my first efforts were to systematize our operations and reduce everything to order. (p.45)

Examine

The Beale author used the word "examine" on two occasions in his story, once relating to Morriss' opening of Beale's mysterious box and a second time when describing a Beale party scouting trip:

From Morriss' statement regarding Beale's box containing coded messages:

The box was left in my hands in the Spring of 1822, and by authority of his letter, I should have examined its contents in 1832, ten years thereafter, having heard nothing from Beale in the meantime; but it was not until 1845, some twenty-three years after it came into my possession, that I decided upon opening it. (p.21)

And later in the story from Beale's January 4, 1822 letter to Morriss concerning the explorations of the Santa Fe region by members of the Beale party:

Early in March some of the party, to vary the monotony of their lives, determined upon a short excursion, for the purpose of hunting and examining the country around us. (p.44)

Fate

One final example of the Beale author's tendency to use the same or similar words when describing Morriss and Beale relates to the ultimate fate that befalls each man in the story. Morriss must confront the hard, possibly impoverished life of a working man after losing all of his savings speculating in the tobacco market. His fate is not so dire as might seem, however, because shortly after the blow Morriss realized that he still possessed the love of a cheering, encouraging wife, the sincere sympathy of a supportive Lynchburg community comprised of good neighbors and friends and his honor. With this support network and his strong character, Morriss was able to forge a life of love for family and close friends, kindness and aid to the poor and friendship to all.

Heavy purchases of tobacco, at ruinous figures, in anticipation of an upward market, which visions were never realized, swept from him in a moment the savings of years, and left him nothing save his honor and the sincere sympathy of the community with which to begin the battle anew...It was at this time that Mrs. Morriss exhibited the loveliest traits of her character. Seemingly unmindful of her condition, with smiling face and cheering words, she so encouraged her husband that he became almost reconciled to his fate. (p.8)

Beale experienced a different fate. At least, Morriss speculated upon the fate of Beale and his men when none of the party were ever heard from again. Despite possessing the "boundless wealth" of thousands of pounds of gold and silver, Beale and his men, apparently, were unable to avoid a gruesome fate in the American wilderness.

I can only assume that he was killed by Indians, afar from his home, though nothing was heard of his death. His companions, too, must have shared his fate, as no one has ever demanded the box or claimed his effects. (p.21)

Edgar A. Poe

Possible Motive in Creating the Morriss-Beale Doppelganger

If *The Beale Papers* is a work of fiction, then, for what purpose would the Beale author bother to establish a doppelganger relationship between Morriss and Beale? One possibility is that the short story, in addition to being a classic cryptographic mystery, is some sort of a "morality play" where Morriss represents the goodness of family and community and Beale the evils of the lust for fortune. This theme is common enough and it may relate to a possible hoax by the author in which the treasure does not exist and there is no solution to the ciphers!

\$750,000

Another possible motive, one which relates to Edgar Allan Poe, is much more speculative and, admittedly, a long shot, but the Beale story may be a testament of Poe's personal experiences with wealth, poverty, marriage, women and community. *The Beale Papers* contains many similarities to Poe's life events and writing style but the most intriguing coincidence, perhaps, between Poe and the Beale tale is the value of the treasure. (See, *The Last Haunting of Edgar Allan Poe: An Identification of Poe Preferences contained in The Beale Papers* here: <http://www.lasthaunting.com/#!essays/galleryPage>).

Wealth and Poverty

Poe's childhood life of fabulous luxury as the "adopted" son of one of Virginia's wealthiest tobacco merchants was in painful contrast to his adult existence in miserable poverty. Poe's loss of wealth, and, in ante-bellum Virginia, societal connections, occurred as a result of friction with John Allan, Poe's parsimonious "adopted" father, who abandoned Poe after a quarrel over money shortly after Poe was admitted to the University of Virginia as a seventeen year old. (Although Poe lived with Allan for fifteen years from the age of two to his seventeenth year, Allan never legally adopted him).

Much of the friction between Poe and Allan can be traced to differing philosophies toward money. Allan was a hard-nosed businessman who had no time for a dreamy teenager who aspired to be a poet. After many arguments over money, particularly concerning expenses and gambling debts at The University of Virginia, Allan effectively cut Poe out of his life. Allan's break with his son plunged Poe into a life of poverty because Allan ceased all financial support. When Allan died in 1835, he had not bequeathed one cent of his fortune to Poe! In a letter to his cousin William Poe, dated August 20, 1835, Poe valued John Allan's fortune at precisely \$750,000. Poe's comments on the subject provide insight into how desperate he was but also the strength of his character:

During my stay there Mr. A died suddenly and left me—nothing. No will was found among his papers. I have accordingly been thrown entirely upon my own resources. Brought up to no profession, and educated in the expectation of an immense fortune (Mr A having been worth \$750,000) the blow has been a heavy one, and I had nearly succumbed to its influence, and yielded to despair. But by the exertion of much resolution I am now beginning to look upon the matter in a less serious light, and although struggling still with many embarrassments, am enabled to keep up my spirits.

That the Beale fortune is valued at "more than three-quarters of a million" may be a mere coincidence, but the fact that Poe's personal "lost" fortune and the Beale treasure are the same amount is intriguing.

Marriage and Family

Did Poe see himself as Morriss or Beale or, perhaps, a combination of both men? Did Poe live at various times in his life as Morriss and then Beale? Some of Poe's life experiences appear to parallel some of the adventures and difficulties faced by Morriss and Beale in *The Beale Papers*.

With respect to Morriss, Poe saw himself as a family man devoted to his wife and mother-in-law. Perhaps more importantly, Poe saw his wife in exactly the same way as Mrs. Morriss is described in *The Beale Papers*. Poe viewed his young wife, Virginia, as the quintessential Victorian wife, a woman who was devoted to her husband, good to those less fortunate, accomplished in the arts and uncomplaining in hard times. Certainly, Virginia suffered as Poe's wife but she never complained of their poverty or later, when she fell victim to tuberculosis. While married, Poe was a devoted husband and he, like Morriss, needed his wife's support after plunging from a world of affluence to one of abject poverty. Also like the Morriss', Poe and Virginia had no children.

Women

Although Poe was nowhere near six feet tall, the physical description of Beale is otherwise similar to Poe's appearance. Poe, at least, saw himself as athletic, dark and handsome and, after the death of his wife, something of a ladies' man. He also considered himself a man of honor, a Virginian and a man "not troubled by impertinence." Poe's relationships with women after the death of his wife were complicated by his poverty, troubles with alcohol and unreliability, but he did "court" a number of artistic ladies. Although famous after the publication of *The Raven* and, apparently, attractive to members of the opposite sex, at least, aspiring female writers and those who supported the arts, Poe could never rise above his poverty. Likewise, Poe struggled throughout his life with alcohol and a combative personality, especially with colleagues in the publishing and newspaper industries. Still, Poe did see himself as something of a ladies' man and the description of Thomas Beale is close to his own appearance.

Community

Like Morriss, Poe suffered a public fall from wealth when he was abandoned by John Allan. In fact, John Allan also suffered a catastrophic loss in the tobacco market and only the fortuitous death of his very rich uncle, William Galt, one of the wealthiest men in Virginia, saved Allan when Galt made him his heir. Like Morriss, Poe had many sympathetic friends in Richmond, but his complete lack of funds eventually forced him to seek out his blood relatives in Baltimore. So in a reversal of Morriss' experience, Poe moved from Virginia to Maryland instead of Morriss' migration from Maryland to Virginia.

Poe was something of a vagabond in his adult life, moving from Baltimore to Richmond, then Philadelphia and eventually New York in search of employment in the newspaper and magazine professions. His community was the world of literature but his home was always Richmond and he returned often seeking contact with his old life. Some of the comments in *The Beale Papers* concerning the Morriss' brick home where the "most unbounded hospitality" reigned for the "elite" of the town were reminiscent of John Allan's magnificent brick home, *Moldavia*, where Poe entertained the cream of Richmond society as a child.

Poe's connections to western Virginia were more tenuous but they did include childhood visits to John Allan's three Lynchburg plantations and trips to the sulfur springs of the Blue Ridge Mountains to escape the hot summers of Richmond. Comments in the Beale text relating to the narrator's "important business" in Richmond may reveal a Poe prejudice that Richmond was the center of Virginia life and the majority of "important affairs" were settled there. Poe, like Beale, was somewhat aloof in his relationships and also a traveler in search of his fortune. Also like Beale, Poe returned to Virginia throughout his life seeking the "safety" of a supportive community.

Conclusion

The technique of repeating certain words in the descriptions of Robert Morriss and Thomas Beale in the text is only one example of word doubling and other repetition in *The Beale Papers*. Particularly with respect to the Declaration of Independence, the Beale text contains a phenomenal amount of word repetition, perhaps more than any other classic tale of comparable size. The inclusion in the text of so many instances of word repetition may have been undertaken for some purpose relating to a code or secret message.

The development of the Morriss and Beale characters via word manipulation and other writing techniques suggest that *The Beale Papers* is a work of fiction. Although some aspects of the story, including word repetition in the development of protagonists, point to Edgar Poe as the author, he remains a longshot because he died in 1849, thirty-six years before the story was first published. Still, the Beale tale may involve some connection to Poe and the solution to the mystery may lie with the identification of some Poe cryptographic or writing technique, such as word repetition, in *The Beale Papers*.

